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FM AMCONSUL CHENGDU  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2611  
INFO RUEHOO/CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 3170

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CHENGDU 000237

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DEPT FOR EAP/CM, G, AND DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 9/25/2032

TAGS: PHUM PGOV CH

SUBJECT: DETENTION OF TIBETAN STUDENTS IN GANSU; LITANG SECURITY MOVEMENTS

REF: CHENGDU 231 AND PREVIOUS

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CLASSIFIED BY: James A. Boughner, Consul General, U.S. Consulate General, Chengdu.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶11. (C) Summary: A Congen contact originally from the area confirmed up to seven ethnic Tibetan boys between the ages of 14-18 were arrested and likely remain in detention in the Ganan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of China's Gansu Province for writing pro-Dalai Lama slogans. According to the contact, the incident may have been at least partly set off by both preparations for a local inspection tour and a recently launched campaign requiring government officials to sign statements criticizing the Dalai Lama. Separately, Sichuan provincial party and military leaders continue to deal with the aftermath of demonstrations in Litang in Ganzi Prefecture following the arrest of a Tibetan nomad calling for the return of the Dalai Lama at a public gathering on August 1. Sichuan Party Secretary Du Qinglin recently made an inspection tour of Ganzi and Congen staff have seen military supplies/equipment moving into Ganzi along the Sichuan-Tibet highway. End Summary.

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Slogans/Detentions in Gansu  
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¶12. (C) A reliable and long-term Congen contact confirmed media reports stating a number of ethnic Tibetan boys in Xia He County, Ganan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu Province were detained and beaten for writing pro-Dalai Lama sloganQat a school during mid-September. As of September 25, five to seven boys between the ages of 14-18 likely remain in detention. While unable to supply names, the contact (a close friend of Congen's Tibetan FSN who also grew up in that area) indicated some of the boys had been beaten during their arrest and subsequent detention. Four of the boys are from the Yari Gye Township of Xia He County, while one hails from Amchok Township. All come from nomadic families.

¶13. (C) The contact stressed the boys, like many people of their age in the area, are not really full-time students. They and approximately 50 to 60 other "students" had been rounded up and sent to the Bora Middle School by local officials in order to demonstrate to a visiting provincial-level inspection team that Xia He County was properly enforcing education requirements. The officials of course were not very happy to find the students had taken advantage of the opportunity to decorate the school with pro-Dalai Lama slogans.

¶4. (C) This loss of face suffered by local authorities in front of higher ups, our contact continued, helps explain the subsequent stern response. In an effort to narrow down exactly who was responsible for writing the slogans, the young people at the school were forced to write down statements to allow security officers to try to make handwriting comparisons to the slogans. Many students refused and some tried to escape by jumping out of school windows.

¶5. (C) Also at play in lead up to the incident, our contact continued, was the fact that the political leadership of Xia He County had recently begun to implement a campaign requiring ethnic Tibetan officials holding at least township-level responsibilities and above to sign statements criticizing the Dalai Lama (Note: If possible, Post will try to obtain, a sample of the required statement. End note). This highly unpopular move had already created a climate of tension and anger within the area.

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Litang Movements  
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¶6. (C) Meanwhile in Sichuan Province, Party and military leaders appear still focused on dealing with the aftermath of the "August 1 Litang Incident," when Tibetan nomad Runggye Adak (ref) called publicly for the return of the Dalai Lama. His arrest led to subsequent demonstrations in the area including the possible torching of a police station. Local contacts confirmed that Sichuan Party Secretary Du Qinglin recently returned to Chengdu from an inspection tour of Litang and other parts of Sichuan's Ganzi Prefecture. Du met with government officials in Batang Country (note: located on Sichuan's border with the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), Batang is reportedly the site of a relatively large People's Armed Police (PAP) installation with helipad. End note).

¶7. (C) Our contacts indicated to us Du also met with military and police personnel in Litang and monastic officials in Dao

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Cheng, Litang, and Batang. In a likely effort to defuse potential local tensions over who had the right to collect them, Du also met with local village chiefs to discuss the harvesting of mushrooms. (Note: a battle between neighboring villages in Ganzi during the summer over the harvesting of caterpillar fungus involved the use of automatic weapons and hand grenades and resulted in the deaths of several people. End note).

¶8. (C) While driving in western Sichuan on September 8, Congenoff saw a convoy of at least 30 military fuel trucks headed along Route 318 (the Sichuan-Tibet highway) in the direction of Kangding, the capital of Ganzi Prefecture. Later on September 10, Congenoff passed a large military convoy of well over 100 trucks headed in the same direction. The trucks, which appeared to be carrying supplies and equipment, were well-sealed in the back to prevent possible observation.

9.(C) Attending to a consular issue in Litang from September 20-24, another Congenoff saw what appeared to be a significant increased police presence along the Sichuan-Tibet highway beginning in the city of Ya'an well before reaching Ganzi Prefecture. In Tianquan (still outside of Ganzi) the dip-plated vehicle in which Congenoff was traveling was stopped at a police check point and the driver's registration verified. The driver indicated it was the first time that had ever happened to him since he began working at the consulate.

¶10. (C) On the road from Kangding to Litang near the village of Xindugqiao, Congenoff saw a convoy of approximately 47 military vehicles including a communications truck. In Litang itself, there appeared to be a significant PAP presence, including at least 70 PAP personnel temporarily bivouacked on the top floor of a local restaurant. While returning to Chengdu from Kangding on January 24, Congenoff passed a convoy of 30 military fuel trucks headed back east to Ya'an.

¶11. (U) This cable was cleared by Embassy Beijing.  
BOUGHNER